DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 449 520 CS 217 408

TITLE	Guidelines for Dealing with Censorship of Nonprint Materials.
INSTITUTION	National Council of Teachers of English, Urbana, IL.
PUB DATE	1999-00-00
NOTE	10p.; Prepared by the NCTE Task Force on Guidelines for Dealing with Censorship of Nonprint Materials.
AVAILABLE FROM	National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096 (Stock No. 19611-1450: $0.75 members, $1.00 nonmembers). Full text at: http://www.ncte.org/positions/nonprint.html.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Censorship; *Critical Thinking; Elementary Secondary Education; Freedom of Information; Guidelines; Information Sources; Mass Media; Media Selection; *Nonprint Media; Public Schools; *Student Rights; *Teacher Role
IDENTIFIERS	*Controversial Materials; *National Council of Teachers of English

ABSTRACT

Intended primarily for teachers, this brochure from the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) discusses censorship guidelines for nonprint media--television, music video, videotape, film, radio, compact disk, and hypertext for personal computers--that English language arts teachers often use in their classrooms and for student assignments. An introductory section explains that the examination of potentially controversial materials can allow students to confront the stereotyping, propagandizing, and editorial gatekeeping so prevalent in the media. The brochure contends that this classroom study of nonprint works is threatened by direct and indirect censorship. It then offers 13 principles and 11 guidelines for educators and practitioners to follow, as well a list of responsibilities of teachers in dealing with nonprint materials. In addition, the brochure provides 17 print resources, 4 nonprint resources, and a selected list of organizations that furnish information about teaching nonprint materials and censorship. (NKA)

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ED 449 520

GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH CENSORSHIP OF NONPRINT MATERIALS

Prepared by the NCTE Task Force on Guidelines for Dealing with Censorship of Nonprint Materials

Introduction

Increasingly, nonprint media--including television, music video, videotape, film, radio, compact disk, and hypertext for personal computers--have become primary sources of information and recreation, as well as emotional and artistic experiences for Americans. Inasmuch as today's children come to school from homes and communities which provide them with wide exposure to nonprint media, it is crucial that English language arts teachers draw upon this background both to recognize the students' knowledge and to develop the students' critical thinking about nonprint media. Students must develop the knowledge, critical awareness, and technical skills to become participants in, creators of, thinkers about, and commenters on the nonprint media that are so pervasive an influence on their lives. This means that teachers often must use materials that, while potentially controversial, need to be examined so students can confront the stereotyping, propagandizing, and editorial gatekeeping so prevalent in the media. Such study allows students to discover that nonprint media works are constructions of reality, have commercial, ideological, and value-laden messages, and employ aesthetic forms.

For decades, many English language arts teachers have included the study of nonprint media works in their classrooms, recognizing that
it is possible to develop students' print literacy and appreciation of print literature by building on students' informally acquired and often sophisticated media literacy skills; nonprint media include artistic and informative works that merit study in their own

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right;
students have a need and a right to understand and critically analyze the powerful nonprint media sources of their daily information and entertainment.

Despite the enormous cultural influence and artistic contributions of nonprint media, the classroom study of nonprint works is threatened by direct and indirect censorship.

Indirect censorship occurs when teachers limit their classroom studies almost exclusively to print materials. The power of the nonprint image, the speed with which the nonprint media communicate multiple messages, and the frankness with which contemporary nonprint materials present controversial issues and images, create a fear that these materials have greater potential for arousing controversy in the classroom and problems with censorship in the community.

Increasingly, direct censorship occurs when teachers who do attempt to include nonprint materials in their courses of study are told by their principals or school boards that they must abide by the ratings developed by the Motion Picture Association of America and not show any film or videotape rated "R"--ratings which our courts have called irrelevant for instructional purposes. Excellent film productions of books that have gained the attention of censorship groups are also targets of direct censorship efforts. Music video, probably the most prevalent source of entertainment for many students, is ruled off limits without regard to its potential use in the curriculum.

NCTE encourages the study of nonprint media works through its Media Assembly, Commission on Media Arts, and Guidelines for the Preparation of Teachers of English Language Arts. In the spirit of its longstanding position on intellectual freedom in the teaching of English language arts, this brochure offers the following principles, guidelines, and resources for teachers, parents, and school administrators.

Principles

1. The students' "right to know" is not limited to print media. It includes the right to know through nonprint media and about nonprint media.

2. Students' freedom of speech includes freedom of expression through studying, discussing, and producing nonprint media.

3. Education at all levels must reflect the diversity and debate inherent in a democratic society. Well-schooled citizens are prepared to confront choice, to raise questions, to consider a spectrum of contingencies, and to develop skills and attitudes of critical analysis. This kind of education must begin early. All classrooms, therefore, need to include a variety of print and nonprint materials for students' discovery, information seeking, and decision making.

4. A primary function of the English classroom is the cultivation and celebration of the imagination. Like poetry, fiction, drama, and the essay, the media arts can inspire and enlarge students' ways of perceiving and being in the world.

5. In a global society, nonprint media can expand students' understanding of cultures beyond their own. Students must develop their abilities to analyze the ways the mainstream media shape their perceptions of other cultures, and encounter a variety of cultural products and perspectives.

6. Language is the means by which teachers and students construct, examine, and evaluate print and nonprint texts for practical, intellectual, and aesthetic purposes. Therefore, the English language arts classroom is an appropriate setting for the technical, aesthetic, and intellectual study of nonprint media.

7. Selection of nonprint materials for study in schools should be the province of teachers and librarians, and the selection should be based on sound educational criteria outlined in the school's mission statement and curriculum

8. The rating system of the Motion Picture Association of America should not be used as the primary guide in selecting films or videotapes for instruction in schools. The MPAA ratings are made by the film industry expressly without regard for artistic or educational value.

9. Intellectual freedom and development require that students learn to dispute civilly. The teacher's role in discussion of nonprint materials is one of mediating between and among conflicting viewpoints and perceptions. Leading a class discussion of controversial topics or works does not imply endorsement or approval of views or values suggested by those works or expressed by students in discussion of those works

10. Research on styles of learning supports the wide use of nonprint materials in the curriculum--including opportunities for analysis and production--especially for students who find visual or auditory works the primary means for learning and personal expression.

11. As with reading literature, the students' prior knowledge shapes their perception of a media text; each student thus "sees" a different work. There needs to be class time for expression and discussion of a range of response to the nonprint media work.

12. When possible, artistic nonprint works should be offered to students in the form and in the time frame in which they were intended by their creators.

13. The responsibility for media arts literacy does not rest with the individual teacher alone. If students are to be taught to participate intelligently with the nonprint media, the schools and communities must commit a significant share of their resources to this goal.

Guidelines for Dealing with Censorship of Nonprint Materials in the Schools

Based on the principles outlined above, schools wishing to foster intellectual freedom should help create an environment in which teachers are encouraged to teach critical analysis and aesthetic appreciation of nonprint media. They should:

1. Include media literacy as an objective in courses of study at all levels.

2. Create, publish, and consistently implement policies for selection of nonprint materials and dealing with censorship of nonprint materials similar to their policies for dealing with censorship of print materials.

3. Invite parents and community members to participate in intellectual freedom committees and study groups to support the selection by education professionals of appropriate nonprint materials for use in the school.

4. Endorse and implement the American Library Association Bill of Rights and its interpretations regarding children's access to nonprint materials, and the American Film and Video Association's Freedom to View Statement also endorsed by the ALA.

5. Provide information for teachers through inservice, ongoing networking groups, and library media center resources for teaching nonprint materials in the curriculum. Specifically, the school should provide teachers with intellectual freedom guidelines, orientation to new electronic media, time to prepare electronic classroom presentations, ways to locate developmentally appropriate nonprint materials, critical reviews of nonprint works, articles and books on teaching nonprint materials, and interpretations of copyright law as it affects the use of nonprint materials, especially videotapes of televised broadcasts.

6. Encourage teachers to make full use of nonprint materials in accordance with copyright laws rather than assuming that the laws are excessively inhibiting.

7. Provide for flexible scheduling so that students may view a nonprint work of art in the time frame in which it was designed to be viewed and have time to respond to the work and discuss it with the guidance of the teacher.

8. Minimize the time and paperwork involved in ordering nonprint materials and the equipment required to present it.

9. Budget sufficiently for ready access to nonprint materials and related equipment.

10. Provide opportunities and facilities for teachers and students to view/listen to nonprint materials in their free periods.

11. Assist in negotiations with commercial interests to reduce fees for educational uses of nonprint media.

Responsibilities of Teachers in Dealing with Nonprint Materials

In order to prepare responsibly for teaching with and about nonprint media, and to deal proactively with censorship of nonprint materials, teachers should:

1. Be aware of the values of their immediate communities and cultures and know the nonprint media the students regularly watch and listen to at home.

2. Work with school media resource centers to select developmentally appropriate nonprint materials for the curriculum from a wide variety of outlets and viewpoints to

encourage students' intellectual and aesthetic development.

3. Preview nonprint materials and prepare rationales for their use. Specify in curriculum guides and course syllabi provided to students and parents how nonprint media will be used for instructional purposes. Provide alternative nonprint works where academically feasible and relevant.

4. Include sufficient introductory preparation in classes dealing with material for which controversy might be expected, including careful explanation of the overriding educational purpose; schedule time for substantial follow-up activity for students to discuss and clarify their initial responses to a media work in relation to the curricular focus; and promote inquiry-based classroom strategies.

5. Help students to understand the interrelationship of nonprint and print materials, and to study the linguistic features of both.

6. Develop techniques of leading discussion and debate, and resolving conflict in the classroom.

7. Provide a cultural, historical, economic, and social context for nonprint media whenever possible.

8. Follow copyright law as it applies to nonprint media and current fair-use laws of broadcast programming for educational purposes.

9. Know how to engage students in producing nonprint materials and how to protect their rights to free expression within schools.

10. Know ways to assess and help students to assess the rhetorical features and artistic qualities of student and professional nonprint productions.

11. Know how to assess students' comprehension of and response to nonprint media through both traditional testing and newer portfolio methods.

RESOURCES

Print Resources

Adams, Dennis M., and Mary E. Hamm. (1989). *Media and Literacy: Learning in an Electronic Age. Issues, Ideas and Teaching Strategies.* Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

Booklist. Chicago: American Library Association, 1905-present. Biweekly review, including assessment of age appropriateness of new print and nonprint materials, including video and computer software.

School Library Journal. New Providence, NJ: Bowker, 1954-present. Monthly reviews of print and nonprint media

ALA. (1992). *Intellectual Freedom Manual, 4th ed.* Chicago: ALA.

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ALA. Rev. (1991). *Intellectual Freedom for Children: A Packet of Materials Compiled by the Association for Library Service to Children, a Division of the ALA.*

Considine, David M., and Gail E. Haley. (1992). *Visual Messages: Integrating Imagery into Instruction.* Englewood, CO: Teacher Ideas Press.

Costanzo, William. (1992). *Reading the Movies: Twelve Great Films on Video and How to Teach Them.* Urbana, IL: NCTE.

Gardner, Howard. (1983). *Frames of Mind.* New York: Basic.

Greenfield, Patricia Marks. (1984). *Mind and Media.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Jenkinson, Edward. (1986). *The Schoolbook Protest Movement: Forty Questions and Answers.* Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa.

Lloyd-Kolkin, Donna, and Kathleen R. Tyner. (1991). *Media & You: An Elementary Media Literacy Curriculum.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Educational Technology Publications.

National School Board Association. (1989). *Censorship: Managing the Controversy.* Alexandria, VA: NSBA.

NCTE. (1982). *The Students' Right to Know.* Urbana, IL: NCTE.

Ochoa, Anna, ed. (1990). *Academic Freedom to Teach and to Learn.* Washington, DC: NEA.

People for the American Way. *Attacks on Freedom to Learn.* Annual Reports.

Postman, Neil. (1986). *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business.* New York: Viking Penguin.

Reichman, Henry. (1988). *Censorship and Selection.* Chicago: ALA; and Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.

West, Mark I. (1987). *Trust Your Children: Voices against Censorship in Children's Literature.* New York: Neal-Schuman.

Nonprint Resources

Bill Moyers: The Public Mind. 4-part series. PBS Video, 1320 Braddock Place, Alexandria, VA 22314-1698. See "Consuming Images," "Leader Questions," and "Illusions of News."

Color Adjustment. Resolution Inc./California Newsreel, 149 Ninth Street #420, San Francisco, CA 94103. Deals with stereotyping of minorities, especially African Americans, by film and television producers.

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Inside Story, hosted by Hodding Carter. 54-part series. PBS Video. Various titles in the series address censorship and media education.

The Media May Be Hazardous to Your Health. Media Watch, P.O. Box 618, Santa Cruz, CA 95061. Images of women in advertising in both print and electronic media.

Note: See also a number of theatrical films focusing on issues in media journalism, e.g., Broadcast News, Network.

Organizations

A selected list of organizations that provide information about teaching nonprint materials and censorship follows. Each state's Department of Public Instruction's English Language Arts and School Library Media Offices can provide policy statements and other resources for teachers of media arts.

National Council of Teachers of English

1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL

61801-1096 (217) 328-3870.

The national headquarters provides immediate assistance to teachers in censorship cases and offers local consultants through its network of affiliates. The NCTE Assembly on Media Arts publishes the newsletter, *Media Matters*.

People for the American Way

2000 M Street, NW Suite 400

Washington, DC 20036

(202) 467-2388

Publishes an annual report, *Attacks on the Freedom to Learn*.

Office for Intellectual Freedom

American Library Association

50 East Huron Street

Chicago, IL 60611

National Education Association

1201 16th Street, NW

Washington, DC 20036

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(202) 833-000

American Federation of Teachers

555 New Jersey Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20001-2070

(202) 879-4420

Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR)

130 West 25th Street

New York, NY 10001

Publishes *EXTRA*, a bimonthly collection of reviews and analysis of contemporary print and nonprint news reporting.

The National Alliance of Media Arts Centers

12121 Broadway, Suite 816

Oakland, CA 94612

Publishes *Main*, a monthly newsletter, which reports its efforts to further diversity and participation in all forms of media arts. Coordinates networking among the many media arts centers around the country.

Educational Video Center

60 East 13th Street

New York, NY 10003

Publishes a newsletter, *Video and Learning* and conducts summer workshops for teachers in video production. Offers for sale to school districts student-produced documentaries concerned with controversial urban problems.

Library Searching

Available at district centers, large systems, and universities are indexes of current articles and documents such as Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature, Infotrac, Education Index, ERIC (RIE and CIJE), and Humanities Index. Articles on nonprint materials can be accessed through subject headings and descriptors singly or in combination, for example: censorship, intellectual freedom, academic freedom, freedom of information, videotape recordings-intellectual freedom, films-censorship, and computer software reviews. Larger libraries will also likely have *Media Review Digest*: "the most comprehensive guide to reviews of educational nonprint media."

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FOR DEALING

WITH CENSORSHIP OF NONPRINT MATERIALS

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